

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please cancel Clams 12-26, without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein, amend Claim 1, and add new Claim 28, as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) A bone fixation system, comprising:

a plate having a top and bottom surface and a central axis extending longitudinally between a first end and a second end, said plate having a plurality of openings between said top and bottom surfaces,

wherein a pair of said openings are first and second slots positioned on opposing sides of said central axis, said first and second slots each having a width transverse to said central axis and a length extending between first and second ends of said slot in the direction of said central axis, said length being greater than said width; and

a drill guide having first and second guide members extending from a handle, said first and second guide members each having a passage with a first central axis extending through a center of an opening at a distal end of said corresponding guide member,

wherein each of said guide members includes an offset portion adjacent said distal end positionable in a corresponding one of said first and second slots against said first end of said corresponding slot, said offset portion having a second central axis extending through a center of said offset portion, said second central axis being offset from said first central axis, and

wherein each of said offset portions is configured to ~~space~~ contact said first end of said corresponding slot to space ~~from~~ an adjacent edge of a hole formed through said guide

member along said corresponding slot away from said first end of said slot such that a fastener inserted into the hole through said slot is spaced a distance from said first end of said slot.

2. (Original) The bone fixation system of claim 1, wherein each of said first and second slots defines a recess adjacent said top surface of said plate.

3. (Original) The bone fixation system of claim 2, wherein each of said guide members includes an intermediate portion configured to reside in said recess.

4. (Original) The bone fixation system of claim 1, wherein each of said guide members has a slot engaging end extending proximally from said distal end and positionable in said corresponding slot in contact with sidewalls of said slot.

5. (Original) The bone fixation system of claim 1, wherein said plate defines a groove in said top surface extending longitudinally along said central axis of said plate, said groove overlapping each of said first and second slots.

6. (Original) The bone fixation system of claim 5, wherein each of said guide members includes a notched medial sidewall oriented toward said groove when said drill guide is positioned on said plate.

7. (Original) The bone fixation system of claim 1, wherein said first and second slots are positioned over an upper vertebrae when said plate is located on the spinal column.

8. (Original) The bone fixation system of claim 1, wherein:  
each of said guide members includes a main body portion extending from said handle towards said distal end, said main body portion having an outer surface extending thereabout; and

said offset portion of each of said guide members has a contact surface positionable against said corresponding first end of said slot, said contact surface lying in the same plane as and forming an extension of a portion of said outer surface of said main body portion.

9. (Original) The bone fixation system of claim 8, wherein each of said guide members has a slot engaging portion extending proximally from said distal end, an intermediate portion extending between said slot engaging portion and said main body portion, said main body portion having a first width, said intermediate portion having a second width less than said first width, and said slot engaging end having a third width less than said second width.

10. (Original) The bone fixation system of claim 9, wherein said contact surface extends along said slot engaging portion and said intermediate portion.

11. (Original) The bone fixation system of claim 1, wherein said distance is 1 millimeter or more.

12-26. (Canceled)

27. (Previously Presented) The bone fixation system of claim 1, wherein each guide member is asymmetrical.

28. (New) A bone fixation system, comprising:

a plate having a top and bottom surface and a central axis extending longitudinally between a first end and a second end, said plate having a plurality of openings between said top and bottom surfaces,

wherein a pair of said openings are first and second slots positioned on opposing sides of said central axis, said first and second slots each having a width transverse to said central axis and a length extending between first and second ends of said slot in the direction of said central axis, said length being greater than said width and said first end of each slot being closer to an end of said plate than said second end of each slot; and

a drill guide having first and second guide members extending from a handle, said first and second guide members each having a passage with a first central axis extending through a center of an opening at a distal end of said corresponding guide member,

wherein each of said guide members includes an offset portion adjacent said distal end positionable in a corresponding one of said first and second slots against said first end

of said corresponding slot, said offset portion having a second central axis extending through a center of said offset portion, said second central axis being offset from said first central axis, and

wherein each of said offset portions is configured to contact said first end of said corresponding slot to space an adjacent edge of a hole formed through said guide member along said corresponding slot away from said first end of said slot such that a fastener inserted into the hole through said slot is spaced a distance from said first end of said slot.